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ABSTRACT

A study examined working conditions for writing teachers in postsecondary writing programs in Louisiana. The Louisiana Association for College Composition (LACC) sent surveys to LACC member schools in 21 writing programs, and 15 responded. The first part of the survey asked for responses to the February 1989 draft of the Conference on College Composition and Communication's "Statement of Principles and Standards for the Postsecondary Teaching of Writing" (the "Wyoming Resolution"). The second part asked for information about working conditions. Results indicated that: (1) only one respondent disagreed significantly with any of the statements of the Wyoming Resolution, although the respondents often disagreed on the priority given to each position; (2) weak support and little appreciation was shown for the work of writing program administrators; (3) departments that employed graduate teaching assistants often limited the assistants to the "ideal" of teaching an average of one course per term; (4) training, support, and supervision of teaching assistants varied considerably; (5) all but three schools reported that all ranks of faculty were involved in determining the writing program's policies; (6) class sizes and proportion of part-time and temporary faculty were consistently higher than recommended by the Wyoming Resolution. Findings suggest that teaching conditions in Louisiana writing programs in 1989 were substandard for faculty and students. Results of the survey have been used to inform faculty, administrators, and state legislators about the Wyoming Resolution and the conditions of writing programs. (The second part of the survey instrument, including tabulations of results, is attached.) (RS)

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LOUISIANA AND THE WYOMING RESOLUTION:

A SURVEY OF WRITING PROGRAMS

James C. McDonald

1992 CCCC Convention

The Wyoming Conference Resolution and the CCCC "Statement of Principles and Standards for the Postsecondary Teaching of Writing" call for action at the grassroots as well as the national level, for us to work out strategies on our campuses and in our states and regions that will move institutions to accept and adhere to the principles and standards of the CCCC. One effective strategy is to survey writing programs in a state or region to learn what the working conditions are for teachers of writing, to compare those conditions to the Wyoming Resolution standards, and to use this data to inform and persuade others to accept these standards.

In 1989 the Louisiana Association for College Composition (then named the Louisiana Association for Language Arts) conducted a survey of the writing programs in institutions of higher education throughout the state, and since then faculty have been using the information from this survey to work for reforms. The LACC questionnaire was composed and distributed in the summer by James McDonald, Ann Dobie, and Renee Harvison. The first part of the questionnaire asked for responses to a number of the positions in the February 1989 draft of the CCCC "Statement of Principles and Standards for the Postsecondary Teaching of Writing" to discover points of agreement and disagreement with the document and what priority each respondent

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would give to the different positions in the document. The second half (which is provided in the appendix with the results) asked for information about conditions for teaching writing in each institution to see to what extent Louisiana's writing programs approached the standards and principles set by the CCCC.

The first part of the questionnaire primarily served to explain why we were asking for information about English departments, to bring attention to the Wyoming Resolution, and to allow respondents to voice concerns about the CCCC principles and standards. The second and more important part asked for information about the department's writing program and the workload and support of the writing faculty based on the CCCC standards. Respondents were asked questions covering

> the selection, support, and evaluation of writing program administrators;
>
> the teaching load, training and supervision, compensation, and voice in policy of graduate teaching assistants;
>
> the percentage of part-time and temporary full-time faculty in the department, their compensation and benefits, and their voice in policy, and the support that they receive in the form of clerical help and supplies, office space, etc.;
>
> and the maximum class sizes of writing courses offered by the school and maximum number of writing students a faculty member might teach in one term.

The questionnaire was accompanied by a letter that introduced the CCCC statement and explained the purposes of the

survey.

The Louisiana questionnaire was mailed in July 1989 to almost every college and university in the state, private and public, including the few two-year colleges in Louisiana. In most cases an LACC member in the English department received the questionnaire, but it went to the freshman composition director when no one in the department belonged to LACC. Reminder letters were mailed to each recipient at the beginning of the fall term. Most questionnaires were returned in late September. The results were distributed and discussed at the joint conference of the LACC and the Louisiana Council of Teachers of English the first weekend of October, shortly before CCCC published and distributed the final version of the "Statement of Principles and Standards for the Postsecondary Teaching of Writing."

Distributing the questionnaire under the auspices of a state English association and primarily to members offered several advantages. Faculty were more likely to respond to a questionnaire sponsored by an association, especially if they were members of the association. (Most of the unanswered LACC questionnaires, in fact, were mailed to schools without an LACC member.) LACC covered the costs of duplication and mailing. Most importantly, LACC offered a forum to discuss and distribute the survey results and the CCCC statement and a structure for continuing discussion and for organizing all categories of faculty to work for reforms.

The Louisiana questionnaires were sent to 21 programs, and 15 responded--Centenary College; Delgado Community College;

Dillard University; Louisiana State University at Alexandria, at Baton Rouge, and at Shreveport; Louisiana Tech University; McNeese State University; Northeast Louisiana University; Northwestern State University of Louisiana; Southeastern Louisiana University; Southern University at Baton Rouge and at New Orleans; the University of New Orleans; and the University of Southwestern Louisiana. Information came in about composition class sizes from faculty at Grambling State University in the spring. In several cases, the LACC member who received the questionnaire passed it along to the department chair or freshman English director or answered the questionnaire with the help of others in the department.

For the first part of the questionnaire, the faculty polled was too small and unrepresentative to be a valid sampling of the opinions of English faculty in the state. Only one respondent, however, disagreed significantly with any of the CCCC statements, though the respondents often disagreed on the priority to give to each position.

The respondents' answers in the second part of the questionnaire indicated that every English department surveyed treated scholarship in composition and rhetoric on a level with other scholarship in English in deciding promotions and tenure and tried to fill WPA positions with faculty professionally committed to composition. However, responses to a question about the released time WPA's received from teaching to run writing programs and writing centers showed weak support and little appreciation for WPA work. Although several departments limited the teaching of writing program administrators to six hours or

fewer, most WPA's in Louisiana in 1989 taught at least three courses while overseeing programs that instructed hundreds of students each term. The freshman composition director at McNeese, in fact, taught four courses, receiving no released time at all. Several departments did not employ a freshman composition director, in which case those duties fell to the English coordinator or chair. Generally, these chairs were released from one course per term for administrative duties and taught three courses, although the English coordinator at LSU-Alexandria received no released time.

The nine departments that employed graduate teaching assistants often limited T. A.'s to the CCCC's "ideal" of teaching an average of one course per term, and no department required graduate students to teach more than six hours a semester. But only two departments reported that T.A.'s had a role in determining the policy of the writing program. Compensation ranged from a low of $4000 to a high of $9030 per year (not counting summers) for an average of $5769. Four schools paid at least some of their graduate students $5000 a year or less, but most schools provided tuition and fee waivers.

The training, support, and supervision of T.A.'s varied considerably from school to school. Four departments required no formal preparation or teaching experience before a teaching assistant set foot in a classroom. The rest required at least a course in teaching writing, eighteen hours of graduate work, writing center experience, or high school teaching experience. Support and supervision for graduate students teaching classes

ranged from extensive to minuscule. Most departments required a practicum course before or during the first term of teaching, supervision by a faculty member or the freshman composition director, regular meetings and class visitations, or some combination of the three. One respondent reported that support and supervision for graduate teaching assistants amounted to an invitation to come to the department head with questions and problems. Significantly, WPA's with heavy teaching loads tended to provide minimal supervision and training for teaching assistants, though some WPA's tried to give extensive support despite teaching nine hours themselves.

All but three schools reported that all ranks of faculty, including part-timers, were involved in determining the writing program's policies. In most English departments no more than ten percent of the faculty were part-time, as the CCCC statement recommends, but the percentage of faculty with full-time temporary positions exceeded the CCCC ten percent standard at seven of the thirteen schools that reported figures, normally departments that were unable to employ graduate teaching assistants. Several departments reported excessive percentages of temporary and part-time faculty. Dillard University apparently had almost no full-time tenure-line English faculty in 1989--70 per cent of the English faculty were reported as temporary full-time, and the rest as temporary part-time. Half the faculty at Northeast Louisiana were temporary, and almost half at Delgado and LSU-Alexandria were part-time, while part-timers taught one-third of all English sections at Southern-Baton Rouge. Schools saved a great deal of money in salaries here,

since the average pay for part-time faculty was under $1800 a course, a rate of pay which projected to a full-time salary of well under $15,000 a year assuming the standard four-course load per semester for full-time instructors at most schools in the state and under $18,000 assuming the five-course load per semester for full-time instructors at several schools. The lowest reported pay was $800 per course for part-time faculty at Delgado. Only three schools provided benefits to part-time faculty.

Class sizes for writing courses were consistently higher than CCCC standards throughout the state, usually much higher. Only one Louisiana school set a maximum class size for freshman composition courses of 20 students or fewer, and every department with a developmental writing program exceeded the CCCC maximum of 15, generally by a wide margin. Institutions in the traditionally black Southern University system generally reported the most crowded conditions, but almost every department reported serious problems. The largest freshman composition classes in the survey were at Southern-Baton Rouge with as many as 40 students in a single writing class (and these class sizes have been increased since 1989). The enrollment of students in composition classes at Grambling, however, regularly exceeded 40, with a high of 51 students in one section, according to figures obtained from English faculty in the spring of 1990. Southern-New Orleans, as well as Dillard and Northwestern State, permitted 35 in freshman composition classes, while the other schools held their composition classes to somewhere between 24 and 30

students.

In developmental composition courses, most departments allowed at least ten students more than the CCCC standard. Dillard, Northwestern State, and Southern-New Orleans allowed 30 students, twice the CCCC maximum. Developmental classes at Southern-Baton Rouge had as many as 40 students a section. Class sizes for upper-division writing courses were generally smaller, but Dillard, LSU-Alexandria, and Northwestern State reported maximums of 35 per class, and the limit at Southern-Baton Rouge was 50 students per class.

Not surprisingly, then, except at Centenary, in 1989 composition teachers often taught well over the CCCC maximum of 60 writing students a term, many at least 100 per term. McNeese and Northeast Louisiana writing teachers could be assigned as many as 150 students, and Southern-Baton Rouge faculty as many as 160, almost three times the CCCC mandate. Southwestern Louisiana had the only developmental writing program in which no teacher could teach more than the CCCC standard of 45 students in a term, with five schools permitting faculty to teach at least as many as 100 basic writing students. Southeastern Louisiana and Southern-Baton Rouge faculty could each teach as many as 120, and Delgado Community College faculty as many as 125, almost triple the CCCC maximum.

Only Centenary and Northeast Louisiana reported adequate services in all six areas listed in the questionnaire ranging from writing centers and media services to adequate office space and supplies. Eight schools reported having no writing center or an inadequate one. Six reported inadequate audio-visual

facilities. Five reported deficient office space, three a shortage of supplies, four inadequate duplication services, and seven inadequate secretarial assistance.

Overall, the conditions of Louisiana writing programs in 1989 were substandard for faculty and students, to say the least. Many programs relied heavily on poorly compensated part-time and adjunct faculty. Faculty and administrators primarily responsible for teaching writing were usually overworked. At the same time, the survey uncovered wide disparities in the working conditions for composition faculty across the state. Stipends for graduate students at some schools were more than double that at other schools, while a part-time teacher at the lowest-paying school received less than a third of the pay per course as a part-time teacher in the highest-paying program. Maximum class sizes for writing courses ranged from eighteen to fifty-one. The maximum number of students a teacher could have in writing courses during one term ranged from 36 to 160. The percentage of temporary faculty in English departments varied from three to seventy, and the percentage of part-time faculty from zero to forty-five.

The results of the survey have been used in several ways to inform faculty about the Wyoming Resolution and the conditions of writing programs, to help faculty in their efforts to effect reform, and to persuade college and university administrators and state officials to improve writing programs in the state. Since 1989 groups of faculty at some schools, sometimes adjuncts alone, have met with deans and vice-presidents and used the survey

results to compare the conditions in their writing programs to conditions in other programs as well as to the CCCC standards to win increases in pay and benefits or reductions in class sizes and to prevent planned increases in class sizes. English faculty at LSU-Baton Rouge have reported that they regularly discuss the Wyoming Resolution at faculty meetings and, as a result, have won reductions in class sizes and improvements in pay for adjuncts.

More recently, faculty have begun to notify state legislators of the conditions of writing students and faculty. One strategy has been to invite state legislators to address groups of English faculty and to take the opportunity to inform them of conditions. One English professor who has run for public office attended a session on the Wyoming Resolution at the Conference of the Philological Association of Louisiana and distributed copies of the LACC survey results to all the members of the education committees in both houses of the Louisiana legislature.

Conducting a survey of writing conditions has helped to organize faculty to work for the Wyoming Resolution. Just planning the survey and collecting the data helped organize and motivate faculty, as the work of faculty groups on different campuses shows. Due to the survey, faculty teaching in oppressive conditions no longer feel as if they are suffering in silence, that no one knows the conditions of them and their students, let alone cares. Adjunct faculty at Delgado Community College in New Orleans decided to work together to find the answers to the LACC questionnaire and to plan how to use the

information from the survey to improve their situations. But because of deep cuts in state allocations to higher education, progress has been slow, and conditions have worsened in some schools.

The Wyoming Resolution has become a central concern in LACC. Since the results of the survey were distributed to and discussed by members attending the joint LACC/LCTE conference in October 1989, the Wyoming Resolution has been a subject of sessions at every annual conference so that faculty can monitor conditions and reform efforts across the state and discuss future strategies. The **Louisiana English Journal**, published jointly by LACC and LCTE, published an extensive article based on the survey, and **Active Voice**, the LACC newsletter, now publishes news related to the Wyoming Resolution in almost every issue. At the 1991 LACC Conference members voted unanimously to endorse the Wyoming Resolution and to send copies of the "Statement of Principles and Standards for the Postsecondary Teaching of Writing" to all the governing boards of higher education in the state as well as to key administrators in each college and university.

We are attempting to broaden our efforts into other organizations and beyond state borders. We have organized sessions on the Wyoming Resolution at conferences for other state and regional associations, and in a spring 1991 session for the Philological Association of Louisiana, Louisiana and Kentucky faculty met to compare conditions and efforts and consider new strategies. Certainly, there is a danger that faculty may limit

themselves to talking to each other and feeling that this alone has accomplished something. But we try at these sessions to draw more people into working for the Wyoming Resolution, to create networks, and to discuss strategies for achieving improvements.

We are feeling our way. The information that we have gathered--and will continue to gather--is a weapon for reform, but we don't yet how powerful it is or the ways in which we can best use it. But it is a weapon with some power.

APPENDIX I

1989 LACC QUESTIONNAIRE, PART II, AND RESULTS

Please take a few minutes to answer the following questions about the employment conditions for writing instructors in your school's English department. If a question does not apply to your school, just write "does not apply."

Rank And Compensation

	Average[1]	Range	# Schools Responding
1. What percentage of English faculty have temporary, full-time positions?	21.0	3-70	13
2. What percentage of English faculty have temporary, part-time positions?	16.9	0-45	13
3. What is the compensation per course for part-time faculty?	$1793.42	$800-$4000	13
What benefits do part-time faculty receive?	None in 12 of the 15 responses		
4. Are the compensation and benefits for part-time faculty comparable to those for beginning full-time teachers? Please explain.	Yes-3 No-7	Yes for salaries only-2 No response-3	

5. Circle the percentage of composition courses taught by tenured and tenure-line faculty:

	0-25	26-50	51-75	76-100
developmental[2]	6	2	1	2
freshman	1	5	6	2
upper-division	2	0	0	11

6. How are policies affecting composition programs established? Are all ranks of faculty involved in policy formation?
Yes-12 No-3

Teaching Load

7. What number of courses does a faculty member normally teach each term?

	Average	Range
professor	3.80	2-5
full-time instructor	4.13	3-5
part-time instructor	3.00	1-5

8. List the maximum class sizes for writing courses:

developmental	25.0	18-40
freshman	29.3	18-40
upper-division	29.4	20-50

9. List the maximum number of students that a faculty member may teach in writing courses in a single term:

110	36-160

10. List the maximum number of students that a faculty member may teach in developmental writing courses in a single term:

78	25-125

11. What released time does faculty get for administrative work in the writing program?

freshman composition director 50%-3 33%-1 25%-2 22%-1 0%-1

developmental composition director 33%-1 25%-2

writing center director 100%-2 50%-1 25%-5 20%-1

other (please name) technical writing director 33%-1

Hiring, Promotion, And Tenure

12. What criteria are used for hiring teachers of writing (tenured and tenure-line faculty, temporary faculty, and graduate assistants?

13. What criteria are used for hiring teachers of literature?

14. Are your composition programs and writing center (if you have one) coordinated and supervised by faculty professionally committed to composition? Explain.

Yes-14 No-1

15. Are publications in journals of rhetoric and composition treated on a par with other areas of research in English for promotion and tenure decisions? Explain.

Yes-15 No-0

Graduate Assistants

16. How many courses does a graduate student normally teach each term?

2 courses-2
1 course-3
0-2 courses-1
1-2 courses-1
1 fall/2 spring-1
3 2-hr. recitation courses-1

17. Do graduate students sometimes teach courses beyond the required courseload in your department for extra compensation?

Yes-1 No-8

18. What compensation and benefits do graduate students receive for their teaching?

per-course average: $1861 per-course range: $1000-$4515

19. What preparation do graduate students receive before beginning to teach?

None-3
One-day orientation-1
Writing center experience-2
Practicum course(s) or colloquium-3
High school teaching experience-1
18 hours of graduate courses-2

20. What support and supervision do graduate students receive while they are teaching?

Supervision by WPA or mentor(s)-8
Practicum course-2
Regular meetings and class visitations-1
Students come to department head with questions/problems-1

21. Do graduate students have a role in developing policy in the writing program?

Yes-2 No-7

Support Services

22. Does your school provide adequate support services for writing teachers in

a writing center	Yes-7	No-8
media services	Yes-9	No-6
office space	Yes-10	No-5
supplies	Yes-12	No-3
duplication services	Yes-11	No-4
secretarial assistance	Yes-8	No-7
other		

Details:

23. Further comments

Thank you!

[1] Averages were calculated by totalling the figures provided in each questionnaire and dividing by the number of responses to the question. The averages do not reflect that some programs employ much smaller numbers of faculty, adjuncts, and T. A.'s or offer many more course sections than other programs.

[2] Developmental composition courses were taught outside the English department at two schools.